The end of the fall semester is quickly approaching. I hope you are reflecting on the many positive memories from this past semester as you enter final exams and are gearing up for winter break!

The new semester is an exciting time, as we look forward to January Orientation--when we will welcome 1,200 new Huskies to Northeastern's Boston campus--and start the cycle of Summer 2020 Orientation Leader recruitment.

This time of the year, students often ask, "what do OLs really do?" and "how can the OL position help me in my future endeavors?" -- as they determine their Northeastern blueprint of when to go abroad, when to go on co-op, when to take classes, and deciding whether the OL position is a good fit for them.
Orientation Leaders really do a little bit of everything. You may see OLs as the leaders interacting with students and families during orientation sessions, making connections, and answering questions. Though this is a large part of the OL experience, there is so much more to what OLs do. Besides being a resource, OLs prepare materials for orientation, serve as direction guides and minglers, lead Boston excursions, create social media content, and staff late-night activities. Orientation days are long, but they are fun and fly by. I highly encourage you to watch Kaia's "day-in-the-life" vlog below to see a sampling of OL life.

I am a firm believer that the Orientation Leader position is crafted to help all students accomplish their future goals. Through a combination of leadership training and orientation programming, OLs walk away with a wide range of skills, including communication, teamwork, critical thinking, customer service, and leadership – helping them land a dream co-op, on-campus research opportunity, or a more clearly defined professional direction. Many of the skills learned as an OL apply directly to what employers seek in co-op students and full-time employment. Don't take my word for it, hear from some of our OLs below who accepted co-ops starting in Spring 2020!

Our office truly cannot do the vital work of transitioning new students and their families to Northeastern without the valuable dedication of OLs. If the position excites you for personal and professional growth, be sure to attend a mandatory information session in January. Details on dates, times, and locations will be forthcoming.

Nick Polanchik
Assistant Director of Orientation

A day-in-the-life of an OL
Follow OL Kaia to see what a typical orientation session is like as an OL!

How the OL position prepares you for co-op

Two of our OLs share how they feel like they are set-up for success because of the OL position.
Kaia
Major: Business Administration - Management concentration
Minor: Computer Science
Co-op: RStudio

What kind of co-op were you searching for?
As a business management major I started my co-op search looking for event planning and product management positions. But, after exploring several different types of job opportunities and talking to my co-op advisor, I began looking for positions in Human Resources. Many of the HR job descriptions called for “optimistic team players,” and similar personality traits that matched my persona. HR also combined my organization skills with my passion for working with people. Ultimately, I accepted an offer from a company whose values best matched my values.

How did the OL position prepare you for co-op interviews?
The OL position allowed me to build my self-confidence which relieved any nerves I had before each interview. The OL position also prepared me to successfully talk about myself and my experiences in an informative manner. A lot of the questions parents and students ask you are about your personal experience at Northeastern; employers are looking for the same thing!

What types of questions did you receive in your co-op interviews that you were able to answer by referencing the OL position?
Often, I was asked to talk though my resume and the OL position was always a good starting point, since it is my most recent and most intensive job position. Interviewers were also happy to see someone so genuinely enthusiastic about a past position. I had so much fun as an OL, and it shows when I talk about it in an interview. Happy people are productive people and companies are always looking for energetic employees. I was also able to use my OL experience to talk about challenges I’ve faced in the workplace, how I work in teams, and examples of my interpersonal skills.

What skills did you learn/strengthen as an OL?
I strengthened several interpersonal skills like teamwork, communication, customer service, and empathy. These skills were especially important to leverage during interviews for business positions. Soft skills are what differentiate you from other candidates, hard skills can be taught in the classroom or on the job, but soft skills are developed with experience.

Even though you haven’t started your co-op, how do you feel the OL position has prepared you to be successful in a new working environment?
The soft skills and self-confidence I developed as an OL are applicable to any co-op position and will allow me to be successful on my first co-op and in my future professional and personal life. As an OL I also learned a lot about myself and what I value in a professional environment. I learned that I love working with people, so I will look for opportunities that encourage team
collaboration and positions that allow me to work face-to-face with clients or customers. I also try to give back and provide my service for others. When I find a company and team I am happy to work for, I know I will be motivated and successful.

Sarah
Major: Architecture
Co-op: Massachusetts Port Authority

What kind of co-op were you searching for?
I was searching for a position related to urban planning, ideally one where I could practice some graphic design work. Additionally, I was looking to work in a small team, because I enjoy the communication and relationship building aspect of jobs.

How did the OL position prepare you for co-op interviews?
Being an OL made me much more confident in my ability to talk to people. The responsibility of leading student groups and reassuring guests, working heavily customer service-based assignments like check-in, and even doing the cheer in front of an audience, helped me learn to present myself well and think fast to answer unexpected questions. As I was interviewing for co-ops, I reflected on this summer and thought “yeah, I’m a strong communicator.” I know how to read a situation and respond accordingly, and I can get my point across in a professional way.

What types of questions did you receive in your co-op interviews that you were able to answer by referencing the OL position?
I received many questions that I linked to the OL position. Examples of questions include, “What’s your working style/ how well do you work in teams?” “This is a pretty fast-paced work environment, are you comfortable with that?” and “Tell me about a challenge you’ve faced in a past role and how you handled it.” I was able to answer all of these confidently by speaking about how I showcased being a team-player with such a tight-knit group, providing examples of my duties as an OL, adapting to all student personalities, and leading difficult conversations after discussing Stepping Up and Stepping In.

What skills did you learn/strengthen as an OL?
I learned and strengthened many skills as an OL, but some prominent ones that I reflect on are effective communication, overall leadership, facilitating conversations, adaptability, public speaking, teamwork, relationship building, and managing stressful situations in a calm way. I was often asked “what are your strengths” in interviews, and I was able to expand on these strengths by providing specific examples.

Even though you haven’t started your co-op, how do you feel the OL position has prepared you to be successful in a new working environment?
There are a few ways I think my OL experience will translate well into the working world, the first being the ability to thrive as a member of a team. A big part of this summer for me was discovering how my personality
fits into a professional setting, and how to complete my work duties in a way that is efficient, fun, and considerate of my coworkers. I believe that I’ve become a more flexible employee through being an OL. Being open to schedule and location changes, handling the unpredictability of new student and guest personalities every week, and even our method of training (not using acronyms, gender neutral language, how to discuss certain topics, etc.) made me self-aware of my behavior and allowed me to make changes to it. Because I was an OL, I now feel like I can handle any curveballs my new co-op might throw at me, because I’ve proved to myself that I can adapt.

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Questions?
Email Nick at n.polanchik@northeastern.edu
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